Capitalism and modern social theory

An analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

(2) definitely to recognise facts, even those which may be personally uncomfortable, and to distinguish them from his own evaluations; (3) to subordinate himself to his task and to repress the impulse to make an unnecessary spectacle of personal tastes or other sentiments.[27]

The teacher in the university has all the opportunities which any other citizen has for the furtherance of his ideals through political action, and should not demand further privileges of his own. The professorial chair is not a 'specialised qualification for personal prophecy'. A professor who attempts to use his position in such a way is able to exploit his standing, moreover, in relation to an audience which is particularly receptive and lacking in mature self-confidence. In taking this position, Weber expresses a personal conviction. If the university were to be made a forum where values were discussed, this could only be on the basis of 'the most unrestrained freedom of discussion of fundamental questions from all value-positions'. But this does not at all pertain in the German universities, where basic political and ethical issues cannot be openly discussed; and as long as this is so, 'it seems to me to be only in accord with the dignity of a representative of science *to be silent* as well about such value-problems as he is allowed to treat'.[28] In saying this Weber does not, of course, mean that the university teacher should refuse to express political and moral judgements outside the sphere of the university itself. On the contrary, Weber scathingly dismisses the false invoking of 'ethical neutrality' outside the academic sphere. It is as illegitimate, in Weber's view, for a man to cloak his value-assertions in the field of politics with a spurious scientific 'neutrality', as it is for him to openly preach a partisan position within the university.

In any case it is essential to recognise, according to Weber, that the question of whether an individual should advance a specific value-position in his teaching should be recognised as separate from the logical relationship of factual and value-propositions in the social sciences. 'The problems of the empirical disciplines are, of course, to be solved "non-evaluatively". They are not problems of evaluation. But the problems of the social sciences are selected by the value-relevance of the phenomena treated... In empirical investigation, no "practical evaluations" are legitimated by this strictly logical fact.'[29]

[27] *MSS*, p. 5; *GAW*, p. 493.
[28] *MSS*, p. 8.
[29] *MSS*, pp. 21–2.

11. Fundamental concepts of sociology

Interpretative sociology

Weber's methodological essays were mostly written within the context of the specific problems which occupied him in his early empirical works; they document a struggle to break out of the intellectual confines of the traditions of legal, economic and historical thought within which he was originally trained. In the methodological essays, sociology is treated as subordinate to history: the main problems of interest in the social sciences are deemed to be those concerned with questions possessing definite cultural significance. Weber rejects the view that generalisation is impossible in the social sciences, but treats the formulation of general principles mainly as a means to an end.

The very direction in which Weber's own empirical writings led, especially as manifest in the massive *Economy and Society*, caused a certain change in emphasis in this standpoint. Weber did not relinquish his fundamental stand upon the absolute logical disjunction between factual and value-judgements, nor the correlate thesis that the analysis of unique historical configurations cannot be carried through solely in terms of general principles, these latter being only of prefatory significance to such a task. In *Economy and Society*, however, the focus of Weber's interest moves more towards a direct concern with the establishment of uniformities of social and economic organisation: that is, towards sociology.

Sociology, Weber says, is concerned with the formulation of general principles and generic type concepts in relation to human social action; history, by contrast, 'is directed towards the causal analysis and explanation of particular, culturally significant, actions, structures, and personalities'.[1] This, of course, reiterates the basic position established in the methodological essays, and it may be said that in general the shift in Weber's concerns in the direction of sociology is a change of emphasis in his own personal interests rather than a modification of his basic methodological views. The degree to which *Economy and Society* represents a new departure in Weber's thinking has often been exaggerated in secondary accounts of Weber's thought. *Economy and Society* forms part of a large-scale collaborative work on different aspects of political economy: Weber intends his own contribution to provide a preface to the more specialised volumes written by his collaborating authors.[2]

[1] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 19; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 9.
[2] The collection of volumes as a whole is entitled *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*. Authors include Sombart, Michels, Alfred Weber, and Schumpeter. The first contributions were published in 1914, and others appeared up until 1930, when the

In describing his objectives in writing *Economy and Society* Weber indicates that the sociological analysis contained in it performs a task of ' very modest preparation ' which is necessary to the study of specific historical phenomena. ' It is then the concern of history to give a causal explanation of these particular characteristics.' [3]

In his essay on ' objectivity ', Weber emphasises that ' in the social sciences we are concerned with mental phenomena the empathic " understanding " of which is naturally a task of a specifically different type from those which the schemes of the exact natural sciences in general can or seek to solve '.[4] One of the main steps to the analysis of social phenomena, therefore, is that of ' rendering intelligible ' the subjective basis upon which it rests; a principal theme of the essay, of course, is that the possibility of the ' objective ' analysis of social and historical phenomena is not precluded by the fact that human activity has a ' subjective ' character. On the other hand, this subjectivity cannot simply be eschewed from consideration by conflating natural and social science. In outlining his conception of ' interpretative sociology ' in *Economy and Society*, Weber preserves this stress upon the significance of the subjective for sociological analysis.[5]

' In the sense in which this highly ambiguous word is used here ', Weber says, sociology ' shall be taken to refer to a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences '.[6] Social action or conduct (*soziales Handeln*) is that in which the subjective meaning involved relates to another individual or group. There are two senses in which the meaning of action may be analysed: either in reference to the concrete meaning which action has for a given individual actor, or in relation to an ideal type of subjective meaning on the part of a hypothetical actor.

There is no clear-cut separation in reality between action thus defined, and behaviour which is purely unthinking or automatic. Large sectors of human activity which are important for sociological purposes lie on the margins of meaningful action: this is especially true of behaviour of a traditional kind. Moreover, the same empirical activity may involve a fusion of understandable and non-understandable elements. This may be the case, for instance, in some forms of religious activity, which may involve mystical experiences which

collection was terminated. See Johannes Winckelmann: ' Max Webers Opus Posthumum ', *Zeitschrift für die gesamten Staatswissenschaften*, vol. 105, 1949, pp. 368–87.

[3] Letter to Georg von Below, June 1914, quoted in von Below: *Der deutsche Staat des Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1925), p. xxiv.

[4] *MSS*, p. 74; *GAW*, p. 173.

[5] The account presented in the first volume of *ES* is a revised version of an earlier essay ' Über einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie ', *GAW*, pp. 427–74 (originally published in 1913).

[6] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 4; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 1. cf. Julien Freund: *The Sociology of Max Weber* (London, 1968), pp. 90–1.

are only partially understandable to a social scientist who has not experienced them. The full recapitulation of an experience is, of course, not necessary to this task of rendering it analytically intelligible: ' " one need not have been Caesar in order to understand Caesar " '.[7]

It is important to capture the main drift of Weber's argument here. While he accepts that subjective meaning is a basic component of much human conduct, Weber's point is that intuitionism is not the only doctrine which can offer the possibility of studying this; on the contrary, interpretative sociology can and must be based upon techniques of the interpretation of meaning which are replicable, and thus are verifiable according to the conventional canons of scientific method. This can be accomplished, according to Weber, either by rational understanding of logical relationships which form part of the subjective framework of the actor, or by understanding of a more emotive–sympathetic kind. Rational understanding is most complete and precise in the instance of the use by the actor of mathematical reasoning or formal logic. ' We have a perfectly clear understanding of what it means when somebody employs the proposition $2\times2=4$ or the Pythagorean theorem in reasoning or argument, or when someone correctly carries out a logical train of reasoning according to our accepted modes of thinking.' [8] But there is no absolutely clear line between the comprehension of propositions of logic in this strict sense, and the manner in which we understand the actions of a man who rationally selects and employs a given means to reach a practical end. While empathy is an important means of obtaining understanding of action which takes place in an emotive context, it is mistaken to identify empathy, and understanding: the latter demands not merely a sentiment of emotional sympathy on the part of the sociologist, but the grasping of the subjective intelligibility of action. In general, however, it is true that the more the ideals towards which human activity is directed are foreign to those which govern our own conduct, the harder it is to understand the meaning they have for those who hold them. We must accept, in these circumstances, that only partial comprehension is possible, and when even this cannot be attained, we have to be content to treat them as ' given data '.

Sociology, must of course, take account of objects and events which influence human activity, but which are devoid of subjective meaning. These phenomena (which include, for example, climatic, geographical and biological factors) are ' conditions ' of human behaviour, but do not necessarily have any relationship to any human purpose. But in so far as such phenomena do become involved with human subjective ends, they take on meaning, and become elements within social action. An artifact such as a machine ' can be understood only in terms of the meaning (*Sinn*) which its production and use have had or were intended to have. . .'.[9]

[7] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 5. Carlo Antoni: *From History to Sociology* (London, 1962), p. 170.

[8] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 5.

[9] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 7; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 3.

The scientific analysis of social action, in so far as it proceeds beyond mere description, proceeds through the construction of ideal types: and, given the difficulties involved in the understanding of many forms of value-directed or emotively influenced action, it is normally useful to construct rational types. Having specified in the ideal type what constitutes rational action, deviation from it can be examined in terms of the influence of irrational elements. The main advantage of rational ideal types has already been demonstrated, Weber considers, in economics: they are precise in formulation and unambiguous in application. Weber emphasises this as a procedural point; it is a methodological device the use of which does not in any sense imply the existence of a 'rationalist bias'.

Weber distinguishes two basic kinds of interpretative grasp of meaning, each of which may be subdivided according to whether it involves the understanding of rational or of emotive actions. The first kind is 'direct understanding'. In this case, we understand the meaning of an action through direct observation: the rational subdivision of direct understanding can be illustrated by the example quoted previously, of the comprehension of a mathematical proposition. We understand the meaning of the sum $2\times2=4$ at once if we hear it spoken, or see it written. Direct understanding of irrational conduct, on the other hand, is shown, for example, where we 'understand an outbreak of anger as manifested by facial expression, exclamations or irrational emotional reactions'. The second kind of understanding, 'explanatory understanding' (*erklärendes Verstehen*) differs from this in that it involves the elucidation of an intervening motivational link between the observed activity and its meaning to the actor. Here there are similarly two subsidiary forms. The rational form consists in the understanding of action where an individual is engaged in an activity which involves the use of a given means to realise a particular purpose. Thus, in the example which Weber adduces, if an observer sees a man chopping wood, and knows that he wishes to get some fuel in to light his fire, he is able without difficulty to grasp the rational content of the other's action. The same sort of indirect process of motivational inference can be made in relation to irrational conduct. So, for instance, we are able to understand, in this sense, the response of a person who bursts into tears if we know that he has just suffered a bitter disappointment.

In explanatory understanding, the particular action concerned is 'placed in an understandable sequence of motivation, the understanding of which can be treated as an explanation of the actual course of behaviour. Thus for a science which is concerned with the subjective meaning of action, explanation requires a grasp of the complex of meaning (*Sinnzusammenhang*) in which an actual course of understandable action thus interpreted belongs.'[10] This is extremely important in Weber's conception of the application of interpretative

[10] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 9. For an analysis of the theoretical significance of this, see Parsons, pp. 635ff.

sociology to empirical analysis. The understanding of 'motivation' always involves relating the particular conduct concerned to a broader normative standard with reference to which the individual acts. In order to reach the level of causal explanation, a distinction has to be made between 'subjective' and 'causal' adequacy. The interpretation of a given course of action is subjectively adequate (adequate 'on the level of meaning') if the motivation which is attributed to it accords with recognised or habitual normative patterns. This entails showing, in other words, that the action concerned is meaningful in that it 'makes sense' in terms of accepted norms. But this is not enough, in itself, to provide a viable explanation of the particular action. Indeed, it is the basic fallacy of idealist philosophy to identify subjective adequacy with causal adequacy. The essential flaw in this view is that there is no direct and simple relationship between 'complexes of meaning', motives, and conduct. Similar actions on the part of several individuals may be the result of a diversity of motives and, conversely, similar motives can be linked to different concrete forms of behaviour. Weber does not attempt to deny the complex character of human motivation. Men often experience conflicts of motives; and those motives of which a man is consciously aware may be largely rationalisations of deeper motives of which he is unconscious. The sociologist must be cognisant of these possibilities, and ready to deal with them on an empirical level – although, of course, the more it is the case that an activity is the result of impulses that are not accessible to consciousness, the more this becomes a marginal phenomenon for the interpretation of meaning.

For these reasons, 'causal' adequacy demands that it should be possible 'to determine that there is a probability, which in the rare ideal case can be numerically stated, but is always in some sense calculable, that a given observable event (overt or subjective) will be followed or accompanied by another event'.[11] Thus, in order to demonstrate explanatory significance, there must be an established empirical generalisation which relates the subjective meaning of the act to a specified range of determinable consequences. It follows from the intrinsic suppositions of Weber's method, of course, that if any such generalisation, however precisely verified, lacks adequacy on the level of meaning, then it remains a statistical correlation outside the scope of interpretative sociology:

> Only those statistical regularities are thus sociological generalisations which correspond to an understandable common meaning of a course of social action, and constitute understandable types of action, in the sense of the term used here. Only those rational formulations of subjectively understandable action which can at least with some degree of closeness be observed in reality, constitute socio-

[11] *ES*, vol. 1, pp. 11–12. Given this condition, as Weber makes clear in his critique of Roscher and Knies, 'The "interpretative" motive-research of the historian is causal attribution in exactly the same sense as the causal interpretation of any individual process in nature...'. *GAW*, p. 134.

logical types relating to real events. It is by no means the case that the actual likelihood of the occurrence of a given course of overt action is always proportional to the clarity of subjective interpretation.[12]

There are many sorts of statistical data which, while they may relate to phenomena which conceivably influence human behaviour, are not meaningful in Weber's sense of that term. But meaningful action is not refractory to statistical treatment: sociological statistics in this sense include, for example, crime rates or statistics of the distribution of occupations.

Weber does not limit the range of information which is of value in the study of human social conduct to that which can be analysed according to the method of interpretative sociology. There are many sorts of processes and influences which have causal relevance for social life which are not 'understandable', but the importance of which Weber by no means discounts. It is essential to stress this, since it has become commonplace to suppose that, according to Weber, interpretative sociology is the sole basis of generalisation in relation to human social conduct. Weber is conscious that his own limitation of the term 'sociology' to the analysis of subjectively meaningful action cross-cuts other conceptions of the range of the field which are often applied: 'sociology in our sense ... is restricted to "interpretative sociology" (*verstehende Soziologie*) – a usage which no-one else should or can be compelled to follow.'[13]

Weber's specific reference to organicist sociology, such as represented by Schäffle's *Bau und Leben des Socialen Körpers* – which Weber calls a 'brilliant work' – is of relevance here. Functionalism, Weber notes, has a definite utility in approaching the study of social life: as a means of 'practical illustration and for provisional orientation ... it is not only useful but indispensable'.[14] Just as in the case of the study of organic systems, in the social sciences functional analysis allows us to identify which units within the 'whole' [society] it is important to study. But at a certain point the analogy between society and organism breaks down, in that in the analysis of the former it is possible, and also necessary, to go beyond the establishment of functional uniformities. Rather than being a barrier to scientific knowledge, however, the achievement of interpretative understanding should be regarded as offering explanatory possibilities which are unavailable in the natural sciences. This does not come wholly without cost though: it is paid for by the lower level of precision and certainty of findings characteristic of the social sciences.

Where Weber does differ sharply with Schäffle is on the issue of the logical status of holistic concepts. Those sociologists who take their point of departure from the 'whole' and from thence approach the analysis of individual

[12] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 12; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 6.
[13] *ES*, vol. 1, pp. 12–13; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 6.
[14] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 15.

behaviour are easily lured into the hypostatisation of concepts. Thus 'society', which is never more than the multitudinous interactions of individuals in particular milieux, takes on a reified identity of its own, as if it were an acting unit which has its own peculiar consciousness. Weber admits, of course, that it is necessary in the social sciences to use concepts which refer to collectivities, such as states, industrial firms, etc. But it must not be forgotten that these collectives are 'solely the resultants and modes of organisation of the specific acts of *individual* men, since these alone are for us the agents who carry out subjectively understandable action'.[15] There is another respect, however, in which such collective agencies are of vital importance in interpretative sociology: this is, that they form realities from the subjective standpoint of individual actors, and are frequently represented by them as autonomous unities. Such representations may play an important causal role in influencing social conduct.

Interpretative sociology, according to Weber, does not involve the connotation that social phenomena can be explained reductively in psychological terms.[16] The findings of psychology are certainly relevant to all the social sciences, but no more so than those of those of other borderline disciplines. The sociologist is not interested in the psychological make-up of the individual *per se*, but in the interpretative analysis of social action. Weber rejects unequivocally the notion that social institutions can be 'derived', in an explanatory sense, from psychological generalisations. Since human life is primarily shaped by socio-cultural influences, it is in fact more likely that sociology has more to contribute to psychology than *vice versa*:

> the procedure does not begin with the analysis of psychological qualities, moving then to the analysis of social institutions ... on the contrary, insight into the psychological preconditions and consequences of institutions presupposes a precise knowledge of the latter and the scientific analysis of their structure... We will not however deduce the institutions from psychological laws or explain them by elementary psychological phenomena.[17]

Social relationships and the orientation of social conduct

Social action covers any sort of human conduct which is meaningfully 'oriented to the past, present, or expected future behaviour of others'.[18] A social 'relationship' exists whenever there is reciprocity on the part of two or more individuals, each of whom relates his action to acts (or anticipated acts) of the other. This does *not* necessarily imply, however, that the meanings involved in the relationship are shared: in many cases, such as in a 'love' relationship which conforms to the proverb *il y a un qui aime et un qui se*

[15] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 13; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 6. For an extensive critical consideration of this and other points in Weber's outline of interpretative sociology, see Alfred Schutz: *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (Evanston, 1967).
[16] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 19.
[17] *MSS*, pp. 88–9.
[18] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 22.

laisse aimer, the attitudes held by one party are not at all the same as those held by the other. Nevertheless in such relationships, if they are continued over time, there are mutually complementary meanings which define for each individual what is 'expected' of him. Following Simmel, Weber speaks of *Vergesellschaftung*, which carries the sense of the formation of relationships and means literally 'societalisation', rather than of *Gesellschaft* (society). Many of the relationships of which social life is compounded are of a transitory character, and are constantly in the process of formation and dissolution. Nor, of course, is it implied that the existence of a social relationship presupposes co-operation between those involved. As Weber is careful to point out, conflict is a characteristic of even the most permanent of relationships.

Not all types of contact between individuals constitute, in Weber's terms, a social relationship. If two men walking along the street collide with each other without having noticed the other prior to the collision, their interaction is not a case of social action: it would become so if they should subsequently argue over who was to blame for the mishap. Weber also mentions the case of interaction in crowds: if Le Bon is correct, membership of a crowd group can give rise to collective moods which are stimulated by subconscious influences over which the individual has little control. Here the behaviour of the individual is causally influenced by that of others, but this is not action which is oriented to others on the level of meaning, and hence is not 'social action' in Weber's terminology.

Weber distinguishes four types of orientation of social conduct. In 'purposively rational' conduct, the individual rationally assesses the probable results of a given act in terms of the calculation of means to an end. In securing a given objective, a number of alternative means of reaching that end usually exist. The individual faced with these alternatives weighs the relative effectiveness of each of the possible means of attaining the end, and the consequences of securing it for other goals which the individual holds. Here Weber applies the schema, already formulated with regard to the rational application of social scientific knowledge, to the paradigm of social action in general. 'Value rational' action, by contrast, is directed towards an overriding ideal, and takes no account of any other considerations as relevant. 'The Christian does rightly and leaves the results to the Lord.'[19] This is nonetheless rational action, because it involves the setting of coherent objectives to which the individual channels his activity. All actions which are solely directed to overriding ideals of duty, honour, or devotion to a 'cause', approximate to this type. A primary distinction between a value rational action and the third type, which is 'affective' action, is that, whereas the former presupposes that the individual holds a clearly defined ideal which dominates his activity, in the latter case this characteristic is absent. Affective

[19] *FMW*, p. 120.

action is that which is carried out under the sway of some sort of emotive state, and as such is on the borderline of meaningful and non-meaningful conduct. It shares with value rational action the characteristic that the meaning of the action is not located, as in purposively rational conduct, in the instrumentality of means to ends, but in carrying out the act for its own sake.

The fourth type of orientation of action, 'traditional' action, also overlaps the margins of meaningful and non-meaningful conduct. Traditional action is carried out under the influence of custom and habit. This applies to the 'great bulk of all everyday action to which people have become habitually accustomed. . .'.[20] In this type, the meaning of action is derived from ideals or symbols which do not have the coherent, defined form of those which are pursued in value rationality. In so far as traditional values become rationalised, traditional action merges with value rational action.

This fourfold typology which Weber delineates underlies the empirical substance of *Economy and Society*, but it is not intended as an overall classification of social action; it is an ideal typical schema which provides a mode of applying Weber's stated dictum that the analysis of social action can best be pursued through the use of rational types against which irrational deviations can be measured. Thus a particular empirical instance of human conduct can be interpreted according to which of the four types of action it most closely approximates. But very few empirical cases will not in fact include, in varying combinations, a mixture of elements from more than one type.

In his discussion of the difficulties posed by the problem of verification in interpretative sociology, Weber stresses that causal adequacy always is a matter of degrees of probability. Those who have argued that human behaviour is 'unpredictable' are demonstrably mistaken: 'the characteristic of "incalculability" . . . is the privilege of – the insane'.[21] But the uniformities which are found in human conduct are expressible only in terms of the probability that a particular act or circumstance will produce a given response from an actor. Every social relationship thus may be said to rest upon the 'probability' (which must not be confused with 'chance' in the sense of 'accident') that an actor or plurality of actors will direct their action in a specified manner. To affirm the element of contingency in human conduct, in Weber's view, is not to deny its regularity and predictability; but it is to emphasise once again the contrast between meaningful conduct and the invariant response characteristic of, for example, a subconsciously mediated withdrawal reaction to a painful stimulus.

In setting out a conceptual taxonomy of the principal types of social relationship and more inclusive forms of social organisation, Weber thus couches his description in terms of probability. Every social relationship

[20] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 25.

[21] *MSS*, p. 124. See also *GAW*, pp. 65ff, where Weber discusses in detail the relationship between 'irrationality', 'unpredictability' and 'freedom of will'.

which is of a durable character presupposes uniformities of conduct which, at the most basic level, consist in what Weber calls 'usage' (*Brauch*) and 'custom' (*Sitte*). A uniformity in social action is a usage 'in so far as the probability of its existence within a group is based on nothing but actual practice'.[22] A custom is simply a usage which is long established. A usage or custom is any form of 'usual' conduct which, while it is neither expressly approved or disapproved of by others, is habitually followed by an individual or number of individuals. Conformity to it is not backed by any kind of sanctions, but is a matter of the voluntary accord of the actor. 'Today it is customary every morning to eat a breakfast which, within limits, conforms to a certain pattern. But there is no obligation to do so (except in the case of hotel guests); and it was not always a custom.'[23] The social importance of usage and custom must not be under-estimated. Consumption habits, for example, which are usually customary, have great economic significance. Uniformity of conduct founded upon usage or custom contrasts with that associated with the ideal type of rational action where individuals, subjectively pursue their own self-interest. The attitude of the capitalist entrepreneur in a free market is the prototypical case of this.[24] Where uniformity of conduct is adhered to from motives of self-interest – in other words, approximates to this type – a social relationship is usually much more unstable than one resting upon custom.

Legitimacy, domination, and authority

The most stable forms of social relationship are those in which the subjective attitudes of the participating individuals are directed towards the belief in a *legitimate order*. In order to illustrate the distinctions at issue here, Weber gives the following examples:

> If furniture movers regularly advertise at the time many leases expire, this uniformity is determined by self-interest. If a salesman visits certain customers on particular days of the month or the week, it is either a case of customary behaviour or a product of self-interested orientation. However, when a civil servant appears in his office daily at a fixed time, he does not act only on the basis of custom or self-interest which he could disregard if he wanted to; as a rule, his action is also determined by the validity of an order (viz., the civil service rules), which he fulfils partly because disobedience would be disadvantageous to him but also because its violation would be abhorrent to his sense of duty (of course, in varying degrees).[25]

Action may be guided by the belief in a legitimate order in other ways than through adherence to the tenets of that order. Such is the case with a criminal,

[22] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 29.

[23] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 29; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 15.

[24] It might be pointed out that Weber here is speaking of empirical cases which approximate to purposively rational action. This is not, therefore, the equivalent of Durkheim's 'egoism', since in Weber's instance the subjective pursuit of self-interest is 'oriented towards identical expectations' (*ES*, vol. 1, pp. 29–30).

[25] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 31.

who, while violating laws, recognises and adapts his conduct to their existence by the very measures he takes to plan his criminal activity. In this instance, his actions are governed by the fact that violation of the legal order is punished, and he wishes to avoid the punishment. But his acceptance of the validity of the order purely as a 'fact' is only at one extreme of many sorts of violations in which individuals make some attempt to claim legitimate justification for their acts. Moreover, it is extremely important to note that the same legitimate order may be interpreted in differing ways. This is something which can be readily illustrated from Weber's empirical analyses of the sociology of religion: thus the Protestantism of the Reformation was a radicalisation of the very same Christian order as was claimed by the Catholic church as the basis of its legitimacy.

There is no clear empirical line between usage and custom, and what Weber calls 'convention'. Conformity is not, in this case, a matter of the voluntary disposition of the individual. If, for example, a member of a high-ranking status group departs from the conventions governing appropriate standards of politeness, the probability is that he will be ridiculed or ostracised by the rest of the group. The mobilisation of such sanctions is often an extremely powerful mode of securing compliance to an established order. 'Law' exists where a convention is backed, not simply by diffuse informal sanctions, but by an individual, or more usually a group, who has the legitimate capacity and duty to apply sanctions against transgressors.[26] The law-enforcement agency need not necessarily involve the sort of specialised professional body of judiciary and police found in modern societies; in the blood feud, for example, the clan group fulfils an equivalent task as a sanctioning agency. The empirical relationship between custom, convention and law is an intimate one. Even the hold of sheer usage may be very strong. Those who frame laws to cover conduct which was formerly merely 'usual' frequently discover that very little additional conformity to the prescription in question is attained. However, usage and custom do in most cases provide the origin of rules which become laws. The reverse also occurs, although less frequently: the introduction of a new law may eventuate in new modes of habitual conduct. Such a consequence may be direct or indirect. Thus one indirect consequence of the laws which allow the free formation of contracts, for example, is that salesmen spend much of their time travelling to solicit and maintain orders from buyers; this is not enforced by the laws of contract, but nevertheless is conditional upon their existence.

Weber does not hold that we can only speak of the existence of 'law' where the coercive apparatus involved is a political agency. A legal order

[26] Weber distinguishes at one point between 'guaranteed' law and 'indirectly guaranteed' law. The first type is backed directly by a coercive apparatus. The second type refers to the case of a norm the transgression of which is not legally punished, but has the consequence of infringing other norms which are guaranteed laws. But Weber normally uses 'law' without qualification to denote guaranteed law.

exists in any circumstance in which a group – such as a kinship group or a religious body – assumes the task of applying sanctions to punish transgressions. In fact, the influence of religious groups upon the rationalisation of law is a main theme in Weber's empirical writings. In more general terms, the inter-relationships between the 'legal', 'religious' and 'political' are of decisive significance to economic structures and economic development. Weber defines a 'political' society as one whose 'existence and order is continuously safeguarded within a given territorial area by the threat and application of physical force on the part of the administrative staff'. This does not imply, of course, that political organisations exist only through the continual use of force, merely that the threat or actual employment of force is used as an ultimate sanction, which may be utilised when all else fails. A political organisation becomes a 'state' where it is able successfully to exercise a legitimate monopoly over the organised use of force within a given territory.[27]

Weber defines 'power' (*Macht*) as the probability that an actor will be able to realise his own objectives even against opposition from others with whom he is in a social relationship. This definition is very broad indeed: in this sense, every sort of social relationship is, to some degree and in certain circumstances, a power relationship. The concept of 'domination' (*Herrschaft*) is more specific: it refers only to those cases of the exercise of power where an actor obeys a specific command issued by another.[28] Acceptance of domination may rest upon quite different motives, ranging from sheer habit to the cynical promotion of self-advantage. The possibility of obtaining material rewards and of securing social esteem, however, are two of the most pervasive forms of tie binding leader and follower.[29] But no stable system of domination is based purely upon either automatic habituation or upon the appeal to self-interest: the main prop is belief by subordinates in the legitimacy of their subordination.

Weber distinguishes three ideal types of legitimacy upon which a relationship of domination may rest: traditional, charismatic, and legal. Traditional authority is based upon the belief in the 'sanctity of age-old rules and powers'.[30] In the most elementary kinds of traditional domination, those who rule have no specialised administrative staff through which they exercise their authority. In many small rural communities, authority is held by the village elders: those who are oldest are considered to be most steeped in traditional wisdom and thereby qualified to hold authority. A second form of traditional

[27] Compare Durkheim's divergent conceptualisation, above, p. 100. Neither the possession of a fixed territory nor the capability of applying force appears in Durkheim's definition.

[28] For a summary of issues relevant to the terminological debate over whether *Herrschaft* should be translated as 'domination' or 'authority', see Roth's annotation in *ES*, vol. 1, pp. 61–2 (note 31). I have used the term 'domination' as broader in denotation than 'authority' (*legitime Herrschaft*).

[29] *FMW*, pp. 80–1.

[30] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 226.

domination, which in fact often exists in combination with gerontocracy, is patriarchalism. In this form, which is normally based upon a household unit, the head of the family possesses authority which is transmitted from generation to generation by definite rules of inheritance. Where an administrative staff exists, subordinated by ties of personal allegiance to a master, patrimonialism develops.

Patrimonialism is the characteristic form of domination in the traditional despotic governments of the Orient, as well as in the Near East and in mediaeval Europe. In contrast to the less complex patriarchal form, patrimonialism is marked by a clear distinction between ruler and 'subjects': in simple patriarchalism 'domination, even though it is an inherent traditional right of the master, must definitely be exercised as a joint right in the interest of all members and is thus not freely appropriated by the incumbent'.[31] Patrimonial authority is rooted in the household administration of the ruler; the intermingling of courtly life and governmental functions is its distinctive feature, and officials are first recruited from the personal retainers or servants of the ruler. Where patrimonial domination is exerted over large territories, however, a broader basis of recruitment is necessary, and frequently a tendency towards decentralisation of administration develops, providing a basis for a variety of tensions and conflicts between ruler and local patrimonial officials or 'notables'.

While in historical reality numerous mixtures of types are possible and have existed, the pure type of traditional organisation offers a contrast with the ideal type of rational bureaucracy, which is founded upon legal domination. In traditional organisations, the tasks of members are ambiguously defined, and privileges and duties are subject to modification according to the inclination of the ruler; recruitment is made on the basis of personal affiliation; and there is no rational process of 'law-making': any innovations in administrative rules have to be made to appear to be rediscoveries of 'given' truths.

Weber sets out the pure type of legal authority as follows.[32] In this type, an individual who holds authority does so in virtue of impersonal norms which are not the residue of tradition, but which have been consciously established within a context of either purposive or value rationality. Those who are subject to authority obey their superordinate, not because of any personal dependence on him, but because of their acceptance of the impersonal norms wnich define that authority; 'thus the typical person holding legal authority, the "superior", is himself subject to an impersonal order, and orients his actions to it in his own dispositions and commands'.[33] Those subject to legal authority

[31] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 231. I have also used here Weber's earlier account of patrimonialism in *ES*, vol. 3, pp. 1006–10.

[32] Weber's alternative exposition is to be found in *ES*, vol. 3, pp. 956–1005; the later version is in vol. 1, pp. 217–26.

[33] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 217; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 125.

owe no personal allegiance to a superordinate, and follow his commands only within the restricted sphere in which his jurisdiction is clearly specified.

The pure type of bureaucratic organisation shows the following characteristics. The activities of the administrative staff are carried out on a regular basis, and thus constitute well-defined official 'duties'. The spheres of competence of the officials are clearly demarcated, and levels of authority are delimited in the form of a hierarchy of offices. The rules governing conduct of the staff, their authority and responsibilities, are recorded in written form. Recruitment is based upon demonstration of specialised competence via competitive examinations or the possession of diplomas or degrees giving evidence of appropriate qualifications. Office property is not owned by the official, and a separation is maintained between the official and the office, such that under no conditions is the office 'owned' by its incumbent. This type of organisation has distinct consequences for the position of the official: 1. The career of the official is governed by an abstract conception of duty; the performance of official tasks in a faithful manner is an end in itself rather than a means of obtaining personal material gain through rents, etc. 2. The official obtains his position through being appointed, on the basis of his technical qualifications, by a higher authority; he is not elected. 3. He normally holds a tenured position. 4. His remuneration takes the shape of a fixed and regular salary. 5. The occupational position of the official is such as to provide for 'career' involving movement up the hierarchy of authority; the degree of progression achieved is determined either by manifest ability or seniority, or by a combination of the two.

It is only within modern capitalism that organisations are found which approximate to this ideal typical form. The main examples of developed bureaucracies, prior to the emergence of modern capitalism, were those of ancient Egypt, China, the later Roman principate, and the mediaeval Catholic church. These bureaucracies, particularly the first three, were essentially patrimonial, and were based largely upon the payment of officials in kind. This shows that the prior formation of a money economy is not an essential prerequisite to the emergence of bureaucratic organisation, although it has been of great importance in facilitating the growth of modern rational bureaucracy. The advance of bureaucratisation in the modern world is directly associated with the expansion of the division of labour in various spheres of social life. It is basic to Weber's sociology of modern capitalism that the phenomenon of specialisation of occupational function is by no means limited to the economic sphere. The separation of the labourer from control of his means of production which Marx singled out as the most distinctive feature of modern capitalism is not confined to industry, but extends throughout the polity, army, and other sectors of society in which large-scale organisations become prominent.[34] In post-mediaeval western Europe, the bureaucratisation

[34] cf. *GASS*, pp. 498ff. The importance of this point is amplified, in relation to Marx's position, see below, pp. 234–8.

of the state has preceded that in the economic sphere. The modern capitalist state is completely dependent upon bureaucratic organisation for its continued existence. 'The larger the state, or the more it becomes a great power state, the more unconditionally is this the case. . .'[35] While sheer size of the administrative unit is a major factor determining the spread of rational bureaucratic organisation – as in the case of the modern mass political party – there is not a unilateral relationship between size and bureaucratisation.[36] The necessity of specialisation to fulfil specific administrative tasks is as important as size in promoting bureaucratic specialisation. Thus in Egypt, the oldest bureaucratic state, the development of bureaucracy was primarily determined by the need for the regulation of irrigation by a centralised administration. In the modern capitalist economy, the formation of a supra-local market is a major condition stimulating the development of bureaucracy, since it demands the regular and co-ordinated distribution of goods and services.[37]

The efficiency of bureaucratic organisation in the performance of such routinised tasks is the main reason for its spread.

> The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organisations exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production. Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs – these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic organisation. . .[38]

These qualities are demanded above all by the capitalist economy, which requires that economic operations be discharged with speed and precision. Weber's position on this point has often been misunderstood. Weber was obviously aware of the view – common since the turn of the nineteenth century – that bureaucracy is associated with 'red tape', and 'inefficiency'.[39] Nor was Weber ignorant of the importance in the substantive operation of bureaucratic organisations of the existence of informal contacts and patterns of relationship which overlap with the formally designated distribution of authority and responsibilities.[40] Bureaucratic organisation may produce 'definite impediments for the discharge of business in a manner best adapted to the individuality of each case'.[41] It is from this latter fact that the concern

[35] *ES*, vol. 3, p. 971; *WuG*, vol. 2, p. 568.

[36] Weber thus criticises Michels for exaggerating the 'iron' character of the tendency towards the formation of oligarchy in bureaucracies. *ES*, vol. 3, pp. 1003–4.

[37] It is important to emphasise that the modern state and economy do not become totally bureaucratised. For those at 'the top', specialised qualifications of a technical kind are not required. Ministerial and presidential positions are filled through some kind of electoral process, and the industrial entrepreneur is not appointed by the bureaucracy he heads. 'Thus at the top of a bureaucratic organisation, there is necessarily an element which is at least not purely bureaucratic.' *ES*, vol. 1, p. 222.

[38] *ES*, vol. 3, p. 973.

[39] cf. Martin Albrow: *Bureaucracy* (London, 1970), pp. 26–54.

[40] cf. Weber's contributions to the discussions of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* in 1909, *GASS*, pp. 412–16.

[41] *ES*, vol. 3, pp. 974–5.

with 'red tape' derives, and it is not wholly misplaced, because by its very nature as a rationalised structure, bureaucracy operates according to systematised rules of conduct. It is entirely conceivable, according to Weber, that prior forms of administrative organisation may be superior in terms of dealing with a given particular case. This can be illustrated by the instance of judicial decisions. In traditional legal practice, a patrimonial ruler intervenes at will in the dispensation of justice, and consequently may sometimes be able to render a verdict on the basis of his own personal knowledge of a defendant which is more 'just' than a judgement returned in a similar case in a modern law-court, because in the latter instance 'only unambiguous general characteristics of the facts of the case are taken into account'.[42]

But this would certainly not happen in the majority of cases, and it is precisely the element of 'calculability' involved in rational legal domination which makes bureaucratic administration quite distinct from prior types: indeed, it is the only form of organisation which is capable of coping with the immense tasks of co-ordination necessary to modern capitalism. Weber states the point as follows:

> however many people may complain about the 'bureaucracy', it would be an illusion to think for a moment that continuous administrative work can be carried out in any field except by means of officials working in offices. The whole pattern of everyday life is cut to fit this framework. If bureaucratic administration is, *ceteris paribus*, always the most rational type from a formal, technical point of view, the needs of mass administration (of people or of things) make it today completely indispensable.[43]

Charismatic domination, Weber's third type, is wholly distinct from the other two. Both traditional and legal domination are permanent systems of administration, concerned with the routine tasks of everyday life. The pure type of charismatic domination is, by definition, an extraordinary type. Charisma is defined by Weber as 'a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities'.[44] A charismatic individual is, therefore, one whom others believe to possess strikingly unusual capacities, often thought to be of a supernatural kind, which set him apart from the ordinary. Whether a man "really" possesses any or all of the characteristics attributed to him by his followers is not at issue; what matters is that extraordinary qualities should be attributed to him by others. Charismatic domination can arise in the most varied social and historical contexts, and consequently charismatic figures range from political leaders and religious prophets whose actions have influenced the course of development of whole civilisations, through to many sorts of petty demagogue in all walks of life who have secured for themselves a temporary following. The claim to legitimacy in charismatic authority, in whatever con-

[42] *ES*, vol. 2, pp. 656–7.
[43] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 223; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 128.
[44] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 241.

text it is found, is thus always founded upon the belief of both leader and followers in the authenticity of the leader's mission. The charismatic figure normally supplies 'proof' of his genuineness through the performance of miracles or the issuing of divine revelations. While these are signs of the validity of his authority, however, they are not as such the basis upon which it rests, which 'lies rather in the conception that it is the duty of those subject to charismatic authority to recognise its genuineness and to act accordingly'.[45]

Membership of secondary authority positions in a charismatic movement is not based upon privileged selection through personal ties, nor upon the possession of technical qualifications. There is no fixed hierarchy of subordination, nor is there a 'career' such as exists in bureaucratic organisations. The charismatic leader simply has an indeterminate number of intimates who share in his charisma or who possess charisma of their own. Unlike the permanent forms of organisation, a charismatic movement has no systematically organised means of economic support: its income is either received from donations of some kind or another, or is acquired by plunder. The charismatic movement is not organised around fixed juridical principles of a general kind, such as are found, with different content, in both traditional and legal domination; judgements are made in relation to each particular case, and are presented as divine revelations. 'The genuine prophet, like the genuine military leader and every true leader in this sense, preaches, creates, or demands *new* obligations...'[46]

This is symptomatic of the break with the accepted order which the emergence of charismatic domination represents. 'Within the sphere of its claims, charismatic authority rejects the past, and is in this sense specifically revolutionary.'[47] Charisma is a driving, creative force which surges through the established rules, whether traditional or legal, which govern an existing order. It is, according to Weber, a specifically irrational phenomenon. This is indeed essential to Weber's very definition of charisma, since the sole basis of charismatic authority is the recognition of the authenticity of the claims of the leader: the ideals of the charismatic movement are consequently in no way necessarily bound to those of the existing system of domination. Charisma is thus particularly important as a revolutionary force within traditional systems of domination, where authority is tied to precedents which have been handed down in a relatively unchanging form from the past. 'In prerationalistic periods, tradition and charisma between them have almost exhausted the whole of the orientation of action.'[48] With the advance of rationalisation, however, the rational implementation of social change (e.g., through the application of scientific knowledge to technological innovation) becomes increasingly significant.

[45] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 242.
[46] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 243. 'Kadi-justice' is administered in this way, in principle; in practice, Weber says, it was actually closely bound to traditional precedent.
[47] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 244; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 141.
[48] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 245.

Because of its antipathy to the routine and the everyday, charisma necessarily undergoes profound modification if it survives into anything like permanent existence. The ' routinisation ' (*Veralltäglichung*) of charisma hence involves the devolution of charismatic authority in the direction of either traditional or legal organisation. Since charismatic authority is focused upon the extraordinary qualities of a particular individual, a difficult problem of succession is posed when that person dies or is in some other way removed from the scene. The type of authority relationship which emerges as a consequence of routinisation is determined in large degree by how the ' succession problem ' is resolved. Weber distinguishes several possible avenues whereby this may take place.

One historically important solution to the succession problem is where the charismatic leader, or his disciples who share in his charisma, designates his successor. The successor is not elected; he is shown to possess the appropriate charismatic qualifications for authority. According to Weber, this was the original significance of the coronation of monarchs and bishops in western Europe.[49] Charisma may also be treated as a quality which is passed on through heredity, and is consequently possessed by the closest relatives of the original bearer. It is mainly in feudal Europe and Japan, however, that this has become linked with the principle of primogeniture. When charismatic domination is transmuted into a routine, traditional form, it becomes the sacred source of legitimation for the position of those holding power; in this way charisma forms a persisting element in social life. While this is ' alien to its essence ', there is still justification, Weber says, for speaking of the persistence of ' charisma ', since as a sacred force it maintains its extraordinary character. However, once charisma has in this way become an impersonal force, it no longer is necessarily regarded as a quality which cannot be taught, and the acquisition of charisma may come to depend partly upon a process of education.

The routinisation of charisma demands that the activities of the administrative staff be placed upon a regular basis, which may be achieved through either the formation of traditional norms or the establishment of legal rules. If charisma becomes transmitted through heredity, the officialdom is likely to become a traditional status group, with recruitment to positions itself being based primarily upon inheritance. In other cases, criteria for admission to office may become determined by tests of qualification, thus tending to the rational legal type. Regardless of which of these lines of development is followed, routinisation always requires the setting up of a regular series of economic arrangements which, if the trend is towards traditionalism, will be benefices or fiefs, and if it is towards the legal type, will take the shape of salaried positions.

The content of the ideals promoted by the emergence of a charismatic

[49] *ES*, vol. 1, pp. 247–8.

movement cannot be directly inferred from the pre-existing system of domination. This does not mean to say that the claims of the charismatic movement are not influenced by the symbols of the order in reaction to which it arises, nor that economic or ' material ' interests are not important in affecting the growth of a charismatic movement. It does mean, however, that the content of the charismatic ' mission ' is not to be explained away as an ideal ' reflection ' of material processes which are effecting social changes. The revolutionary dynamic, for Weber, is not to be pinned to any rational sequence of overall historical development. This preserves on a more empirical level the dismissal of developmental theories which Weber reaches according to purely theoretical considerations.

The influence of market relationships : classes and status groups

Weber's rejection of overall theories of historical development applies equally to Hegelianism and Marxism. But a further basic conceptual and empirical line of thought in Weber's work is particularly relevant to the claims of Marxism. If ' theories of history ' as a whole are impossible, it follows on the more specific level that any theory which attempts to tie historical development to the universal causal predominance of economic or class relationships is doomed to failure. Weber's discussion of ' class ', ' status ' and ' party ' thus establishes these as three ' dimensions ' of stratification, each of which is conceptually separate from the others, and specifies that, on an empirical level, each may causally influence each of the others.

Economy and Society contains two sections dealing with class and status groups.[50] Both sections, however, are short, and are incommensurate with the importance of the concepts in Weber's historical writings. Like Marx, Weber did not complete a detailed analytical account of the notion of class and its relationship to other bases of stratification in society. Weber's conception of class takes its point of departure from his more generalised analysis of economic action in a market. Economic action is defined by Weber as conduct which seeks, through peaceful means, to acquire control of desired utilities.[51] In Weber's usage, utilities include both goods and services. A market is distinguished from direct reciprocal exchange (barter) in so far as it involves speculative economic action oriented towards the securing of profit through competitive trading. ' Classes ' can only exist when such a market – which may take numerous concrete forms – has come into existence, and this in turn presupposes the formation of a money economy.[52] Money plays an extremely important part in this because it makes possible the estimation of the values exchanged in quantitative and fixed, rather than in subjective,

[50] The earlier rendition is in *ES*, vol. 2, pp. 926–40; the later analysis is to be found in *ES*, vol. 1, pp. 302–7.

[51] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 63. For an earlier formulation of the concept of the ' economic ', see *MSS*, p. 65.

[52] *ES*, vol. 1, pp. 80–2.

terms. Economic relationships thus free themselves from the particular ties and obligations of local community structure, and become fluidly determined by the material chances which individuals have of using property, goods or services which they possess for exchange on the competitive market. 'Therewith', Weber says, '"class struggles" begin.'[53]

The 'market situation' of any object of exchange is defined as 'all the opportunities of exchanging it for money which are known to the participants in exchange relationships and aid their orientation in the competitive price struggle.'[54] Those who own comparable objects of exchange (both goods and services) share 'in common a specific causal component of their life chances'.[55] That is to say, those who share the same market or 'class situation' are all subject to similar economic exigencies, which causally influence both the material standards of their existence, and what sorts of personal life experiences they are able to enjoy. A 'class' denotes an aggregate of individuals who thus share the same class situation. In these terms, those who are propertyless, and who can only offer services on the market, are divided according to the kinds of services they can offer, just as those who own property can be differentiated according to what they own and how they use it for economic ends.

Weber admits, with Marx, that ownership versus non-ownership of property is the most important basis of class division in a competitive market. He also follows Marx in distinguishing, among those who possess property, rentier classes and entrepreneurial classes, which Weber calls respectively 'ownership classes' (*Besitzklassen*) and 'commercial classes' (*Erwerbsklassen*). Ownership classes are those in which owners of property receive rents through their possession of land, mines, etc. These rentiers are 'positively advantaged' ownership classes. 'Negatively advantaged' ownership classes include all those without either property or skills to offer (for example, the *déclassé* Roman proletarians). Between the positively and the negatively advantaged groups fall a range of middle classes who either own small properties or who possess skills which can be offered as marketable services. These include such categories of persons as officials, artisans and peasants. Commercial classes are those where the positively advantaged groups are either entrepreneurs offering goods for sale on the market, or those who participate in the financing of such operations, such as bankers.[56] Wage-labourers constitute the negatively advantaged commercial classes. The middle classes include the petty bourgeoisie and administrative officials in government or in industry.

Most secondary discussions of Weber's conception of class have concentrated upon his earlier discussion (see below, note 59, p. 166), and have

[53] *ES*, vol. 2, p. 928.
[54] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 82.
[55] *ES*, vol. 2, p. 927.
[56] Positively advantaged commercial classes also sometimes include those who are able to control a monopoly of particular skills, such as professionals and craft workers. *ES*, vol. 1, p. 304.

neglected this second formulation. This is unfortunate, since it gives the impression that Weber's conception is less unified than in fact is the case. While in principle, according to the identification of class situation with market situation, there could be as many class divisions as there are minute gradations of economic position, in fact Weber regards only certain definite combinations, organised around the ownership and non-ownership of property, as historically significant. In his later exposition, besides differentiating ownership classes and commercial classes, Weber also distinguishes what he calls simply 'social' classes. In so far as individuals may move freely within a common cluster of class situations (e.g., a man may move without difficulty from a clerical job in the civil service to one in a business firm), they form a definite social class. Compressing some of the divisions which compose the commercial classes, Weber describes the social class composition of capitalism as consisting of the following: 1. The manual working class. The existence of skill differentials – especially where they are controlled as monopolies – is a major factor threatening the unity of the working class. But the increasing mechanisation of industry is pushing a large proportion of workers into the semi-skilled category. 2. The petty bourgeoisie. 3. Propertyless white-collar workers, technicians and intelligentsia. 4. The dominant entrepreneurial and propertied groups, who also tend to share a privileged access to educational opportunities.[57]

The relationship between the existence of similar class interests, and the occurrence of manifest class conflict, is historically contingent. Groups of individuals may share a similar class situation without being aware of it, and without forming any organisation to further their common economic interests. It is not always the most marked inequalities in the distribution of property which lead to class struggles. Class conflict is likely to develop only where the unequal distribution of life-chances comes to be perceived as not an 'inevitable fact': in many periods of history, the negatively advantaged classes accept their position of inferiority as legitimate. Class consciousness most readily becomes developed in circumstances where: 1. The class enemy is a group in visible and direct economic competition: in modern capitalism, for example, the working class can more readily be organised to fight against the industrial entrepreneur or manager, rather than against the more remote financier or shareholder. 'It is not the rentier, the shareholder, and the banker who suffer the ill will of the worker, but almost exclusively the manufacturer and the business executives who are the direct opponents of workers in wage conflicts.'[58] 2. There is a large number of people who share the same class situation. 3. Communication and assembly are simple to organise: as where,

[57] *ES*, vol. 1, p. 305; cf. Paul Mombert: 'Zum Wesen der sozialen Klasse', in Melchior Palyi: *Erinnerungsgabe für Max Weber* (Munich and Leipzig, 1923), pp. 239–75.
[58] *ES*, vol. 2, p. 931. It is this fact, Weber points out, which has made possible the growth of patriarchal socialism. Similarly, in the army, the soldier resents the corporal rather than the higher echelons of command. *GASS*, p. 509.

for instance, in modern factory production, the workers are concentrated together in large-scale productive units. 4. The class in question is provided with leadership – such as from the intelligentsia – which supplies clear and comprehensible goals for their activity.

'Class' refers to the objective attributes of the market situation of numbers of individuals, and as such the influence of class upon social action operates independently of any valuations these individuals might make of themselves or others. Since Weber rejects the notion that economic phenomena directly determine the nature of human ideals, it follows that such valuations have to be conceptualised independently of class interests. Weber therefore distinguishes class situation from 'status situation' (*ständische Lage*). The status situation of an individual refers to the evaluations which others make of him or his social position, thus attributing to him some form of (positive or negative) social prestige or esteem. A status group is a number of individuals who share the same status situation. Status groups, unlike classes, are almost always conscious of their common position. 'In relation to classes, the status group comes closest to the "social" class and is most unlike the "commercial" class.'[59] However, there is no necessary or universal connection between status situation and any of the three types of class which Weber distinguishes. Property classes often, but by no means always, constitute definite status groups; commercial classes rarely do so.

Status groups normally manifest their distinctiveness through following a particular life-style, and through placing restrictions upon the manner in which others may interact with them. The enforcement of restrictions upon marriage, sometimes involving strict endogamy, is a particularly frequent way in which this may be achieved. Caste represents the most clear-cut example of this; here the distinctive character of the status group is held to rest upon ethnic factors, and is enforced by religious prescriptions as well as by legal and conventional sanctions. While it is only in traditional India that a whole society is organised according to strict caste principles, caste-like properties are also characteristic of the position of 'pariah' peoples. These are ethnic minorities, the most notable historical example of which is that of the Jews, whose economic activities are limited to a particular occupation or range of occupations, and whose contacts with the 'host' population are limited.

Stratification by status is not, for Weber, simply a 'complication' of class hierarchies: on the contrary, status groups, as differentiated from classes, are of vital significance in numerous phases of historical development. Moreover, status groups may act to influence in a direct way the operation of the market, and so may causally affect class relationships. One historically important way in which this has occurred is through the restriction of the

[59] *ES*, vol. 1, pp. 306–7; *WuG*, vol. 1, p. 180. For Marx's use of the term *Stand*, see above, p. 6, n. 22.

spheres of economic life which are permitted to become governed by the market:

> For example, in many Hellenic cities during the 'status era' and also originally in Rome, the inherited estate (as is shown by the old formula for placing spendthrifts under a guardian) was monopolised, as were the estates of knights, peasants, priests, and especially the clientele of the craft and merchant guilds. The market is restricted, and the power of naked property *per se*, which gives its stamp to class formation, is pushed into the background.[60]

Many instances can be adduced in which men draw clear distinctions between economic possession and status privilege. The possession of material property is not by any means always a sufficient basis for entry into a dominant status group. The claims of *nouveaux riches* for entry to an established status group are not likely to be accepted by those within it, although the individual can ordinarily use his wealth to ensure that his offspring can acquire the necessary criteria for membership. Nevertheless, Weber does stress that, while status group membership 'normally stands in sharp opposition to the pretensions of sheer property', it is still the case that property is 'in the long run' recognised 'with extraordinary regularity' as a status qualification.[61] The degree to which status stratification is prevalent in any given social order is influenced by how far the society in question is subject to rapid economic transformation. Where marked economic changes are occurring, class stratification is a more pervasive determinant of action than in a situation where there is little change. In the latter case, status differentials come increasingly to the fore.

Both class and status group membership may be a basis of social power; but the formation of political parties is a further, analytically independent, influence upon the distribution of power. A 'party' refers to any voluntary association which has the aim of securing directive control of an organisation in order to implement certain definite policies within that organisation. In this definition, parties can exist in any form of organisation in which the formation of freely recruited groupings is permitted: from a sports club up to the state.[62] The bases for the establishment of parties, even of modern political parties, are diverse. A common class or status situation may provide the sole source of recruitment to a political party but this is fairly rare. 'In any individual case, parties may represent interests determined through class situation or status situation.... But they need be neither purely class nor purely status parties; in fact, they are more likely to be mixed types, and sometimes they are neither.'[63]

The growth of the modern state has brought with it the development of mass political parties, and the emergence of professional politicians. A man whose occupation is concerned with the struggle for political power may

[60] *ES*, vol. 2, p. 937.
[61] *ES*, vol. 2, p. 932.
[62] *ES*, vol. 1, pp. 284–6.
[63] *ES*, vol. 2, p. 938.

either live 'for' politics or 'off' politics. An individual who relies upon his political activities to supply his main source of income lives 'off' politics; a man who engages in full-time political activities, but who does not receive his income from this source, lives 'for' politics. A political order in which recruitment to positions of power is filled by those who live 'for' politics is necessarily drawn from a propertied elite, who are usually rentiers rather than entrepreneurs. This does not imply that such politicians will pursue policies which are wholly directed towards favouring the interests of the class or status group from which they originate.[64]

[64] *FMW*, pp. 85–6.